

the view from under glass

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the view from under glass by werepope (quiteparadise)

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Eddie is small but he's not anything like delicate. Richie only needs occasional reminders.

Or "Who are you going to believe, me or your own eyes?"

the view from under glass

“He was the sort of person who
stood on mountaintops during
thunderstorms in wet copper armor
shouting ‘All the Gods are bastards.’”

-Terry Pratchett

Eddie isn't delicate, no matter what his mother says. What she's been saying for seventeen years. Eddie holds his own just fine, among his friends and against the likes of Henry Bowers and It and the entire population of Derry high school. Eddie's hard and sharp as nails, and fuck anyone who says otherwise. Except, sometimes, Richie.

Richie's never treated him like something fragile, something that needs to be kept under glass and out of direct sunlight. Richie is the first one to yank Eddie into a wrestling match when movie night lags into boredom, to shove a wet fingertip into Eddie's ear or his knuckles into Eddie's hair, just to hear him squawk, just for the fun of retaliation. He's the one to leave hickeys on Eddie's neck and bite marks on his chest. He's intensely, gratefully aware of Eddie's toughness. Except when he isn't.

Mrs K still prefers to think of Eddie as her precious baby boy. She doesn't hover like she used to, doesn't overbear since Eddie stopped taking a good fifty percent of her shit. But Richie sees the looks, catches the tones. Sonia chooses to believe Eddie remains a little angel because if she actually let herself entertain the thought of him being anything less, she'd go off the deep end and lock Eddie up, cloister him away. Proper Anchorite shit. She's fully capable. Richie's seen it in the way she looks at him and all the other Losers, like they're something she's prepared to freeze off of her darling boy.

But in the deep down part of her brain where she pushes all the stuff

she doesn't want to think about, she's got to know. She wouldn't give Richie all those hostile looks if she didn't more than just suspect that her son was getting sinful dirty with him on the regular. She wouldn't be as quick to bust in on the Losers when they're congregated together in Eddie's room, blood pressure visibly up and ready to have a go at the whole lot of them, if she needs to. For Eddie's own good, of course.

But all that possessiveness means Eddie gets away with stuff, too.

Mrs K likes to wheedle around his bad moods and bribe him back into good behaviour with movie tickets and video games. She went so far as to buy him a copy of *Mortal Kombat II*, after a week long silent treatment. Even with all the blood and decapitations, Eddie's still mostly pissed off at her, to the point that he doesn't want anyone to come over and play it. She's just trying to get him to stay in, according to him, and he's probably right. But he's the only one of them with a Sega and he's too protective of the thing to actually bring it over to Bill's for them to play. So Mrs K gets to eavesdrop on them when they all pile up in Eddie's room, taking turns trying to beat Bev who is, to absolutely no one's surprise, really good at kicking all of their asses.

Richie gets bored of getting Kiss of Death-ed after the third match, and Eddie can play whenever the fuck he wants to, which makes Richie feel not the least bit guilty for taking him out of rotation by tackling him over onto the carpet. Eddie huffs and punches him too lightly on the shoulder to really give a shit about missing a turn. He gets quiet and tense when Richie nuzzles into him. The Losers don't care that they're dating but there's a line between being a couple and being That Couple, and making out in full view usually means they get pelted with whatever's on hand.

Tonight the others have better things to do, and Richie's not really aiming for more than a distraction. He blows a raspberry against Eddie's neck, as loud and ticklish as he can make it. Eddie doesn't quite yell. Richie knows all the magic spots that override yelling with better reactions, and this one makes Eddie curl up under him, shrieking laughter as he tries to shield himself from sneaky hands and nipping kisses.

He halfheartedly tries to shove Richie off, gasping at him: "Stop,

asshole, no!”

But this is an old play and they both know their moves. Richie relents a few inches, to shift back onto his knees, and Eddie grabs a fistful of shirt to keep him in close. Richie pins Eddie and growls against the tender skin of his throat, threatening everything and nothing. Eddie rolls onto his back as much as he can, with his legs bent up over one of Richie’s thighs, and Richie gets his teeth in the collar of Eddie’s shirt.

The Losers are used to them being aggressive and handsy with each other. They’re a lot more tolerant than most people would be, given the frequency of it. Mike jumps a bit at the sudden pitch of Eddie’s yell, Stan rolls his eyes, and Bev discovers a combo move that launches Bill’s character into acid. The yelling over that outdoes Eddie and Richie’s volume by a long shot. But when Eddie’s mom shoves the door open hard enough to knock into the wall, she doesn’t even glance at the pile of teenagers spilling off the bed.

Richie tries to sit up. It’s a lizard brain reaction, like getting caught with his hand in the cookie jar -- only a billion times worse, judging by the look on Mrs K’s face. It’s enough to make his balls draw up. He has no natural resistance to mom-fury, unlike Eddie, who knows better. Eddie tightens his grip on Richie’s shirt and holds him in place with iron strength.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Mrs K asks, just shy of yelling.

The other Losers have frozen too. They have varying degrees of familiarity with parental anger, and it probably shows on their faces, plain as day. Eddie, though? Butter wouldn’t melt.

He relaxes a little, sighs. “Rough-housing,” he says, grudging, like an admission, like he doesn’t have a brand new suck drying mark on his collarbone right this second.

Mrs K hesitates. The possibilities filter through her head like slides: kick Richie out, kick them all out, ground Eddie for life, drive him to the monastery tonight, brick him into the anchorhold herself. Richie is eternally grateful that Mrs K’s brand of abuse didn’t include poisoning her kid, but that doesn’t mean he’s not prepared for the

very real possibility that she will snap and take Eddie out with her.

“Sorry, mommy,” Eddie says, before she can wind up into a fit. “We’ll be careful.”

Richie had been absently aroused while tussling with Eddie. They’ve been fucking for more than a year now, but extended physical contact still short circuits his brain almost every time. His boyfriend is fucking hot. Sue him. But hearing Eddie go sweetly quiet and promise they’re going to use a condom kicks him up into half-chub -- even if that’s in no way what Eddie’s saying, Jesus Christ, he’s talking to his *mother* -- calm down.

Mrs K is still spooling up for something, and if Richie has to get up now he’s going to be on a permanent ban from the Kaspbrak house for sure, but Bill breaks the tension by uppercutting Bev’s character so hard the little guy appears and sing-songs: *toasty* . Bev and Ben both whirl on him with claims of cheating, and whatever horrors of iniquity Mrs K had been imagining going on in here are overshadowed by the pixelated brutality of Bev’s swift revenge.

It’s not exactly smooth, but it’s hard to start a holy war on behalf of your son’s non-existent chastity when there’s a death tournament waging on screen, so Mrs K bows out with another glare for Richie.

She leaves the door open.

Richie and Eddie listen for her steps to make it all the way into her bedroom before moving an inch.

It’s annoying that Eddie’s mom thinks her son is a vestal virgin but it’s infuriating that under all her shit, she knows he’s not and that Richie is directly to blame. He’d hate her for it, but there are other, better reasons for that than Eddie’s reputation or lack thereof. So Richie tries to be a good boyfriend: he sneaks out when Eddie’s paranoid about being caught; he pays his dues to respectability and comes in the front door more often than not; even plays nice with Mrs K. But it still flies all over him, when she pulls a crap stunt like this.

Eddie releases his death grip and Richie sits back on his heels. He

rubs a hand over his face, eye pinched closed, and goes over the brief but weighty pros and cons list that reminds him why Eddie is worth an endless amount of bullshit. By item three, he's calm enough to laugh about it, to be reeled in by Eddie and shoved down onto the floor beside him. He squirms until he can jam their shoulders together, tip his head against Eddie's, hold onto him palm to palm.

"One day she's going to catch you actually doing something," Stan warns, whispering. He's got a healthy amount of parental fear. He doesn't need to be reminded how close by she still is. "She'll castrate you both, when she does."

Richie has considered the possibility. It's right up there with Eddie being stuck at the top of a tower or shipped out of state to one of those touchy-feely schools for emotionally unstable kids. Richie's not too worried, though. He knows what he and Eddie are capable of, when pushed to it.

"Nah," he says, pulling their hands up onto his stomach. "Eddie'd fight to save my balls."

Eddie groans and kicks him, but he doesn't let go.

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Eddie isn't delicate and no one knows it better than Richie, but that doesn't mean he doesn't get protective of him.

Richie finally maxed out at six-one this year. It's not that impressive, considering it's all bone with very little muscle, but he's the tallest Loser and he's unduly proud of it. Eddie hit a growth spurt at fifteen and hasn't budged a full inch since then, making him a whole five foot five. He's not bitter, exactly, but he had some pretty complicated body issues anyway, after all the shit with his mom, and being short hasn't helped.

People treat him differently for it. The kids at school are a given. They're assholes and have been since day one. That's expected. But

adults do it, too, and that drives Eddie up the wall.

A couple weeks ago they drove over to Bangor for a concert and the woman at security gave Eddie a hard time about his ID. Before that, a server assumed he was Ben's little brother. Someone even once accused him of being too young to get into a PG-13 movie, which was hilarious up until Eddie demanded to speak to the manager, shaking all over, and Richie had to crowd into him and promise to hold his hand during any scary parts before Eddie could even breathe right.

It's not news to anyone that Eddie's little, and he gets mad about it more than he gets self-conscious anymore, but Richie loves it unapologetically. He loves that Eddie is just the right height to throw an arm around, that he's small enough to sit in Richie's lap without his legs immediately going to sleep. He loves the way Eddie pushes up onto his tiptoes to kiss him, and how well every part of him fits under Richie's hands.

He doesn't have to think about Eddie's smallness until it's shoved into his face by an asshole security guard or some shithead bully who wants to make himself feel bigger. And when they do, Eddie's fully capable of taking care of it. But that doesn't mean Richie doesn't want to make himself bigger to compensate, doesn't want to wrap himself around Eddie like a coat and punch someone's lights out. He's good, though, he doesn't Hulk out on anyone. Or, at least, he hasn't yet.

Ben's been encouraging Eddie to join the track team since they got into high school, maybe just to have someone to hang out with at practice, but Eddie finally bites the bullet senior year. Richie's not allowed to sit on the bleachers and watch -- Coach Shaughnessy and Eddie both tell him off for trying -- so he sneaks through Eddie's window to wait for him on his bed, doing a half-assed job of reading *Beowulf* and trying to ignore how much he needs to piss.

He's not worried. Eddie's a shrimp but he's no fainting maiden in need of someone to swoop him up manfully when he gets the vapors. Eddie gets mad like a wet cat when someone pisses him off, and if they keep pushing he gets this cold fury that has scared Richie more than once. He's totally capable of holding his own. Richie has no

reason to worry.

It's just that it's five now, and practice was supposed to end at four, and there are at least three complete jerk-offs on the track team who have been giving Ben shit for years. Ben can take care of himself too.

He takes the high road. Ben's looked a bully dead in the eye and told him that being fat is better than being the kind of person who needs to shit on someone to get off. Not his words, exactly, but that was the gist of it.

Ben and Eddie together could probably take the world on. There's nothing to worry about. And just when Richie's considering sneaking back outside to pee in the bushes versus tiptoeing across the hall to the bathroom, the front door slams closed.

Richie sits up like a dog who's just heard his person's keys in the door.

Eddie yells that he's home, gets no response that Richie can hear, and jogs up the stairs. Practice must not have taken too much out of him.

He used to wheeze just from the stairs, on bad days. But the inhaler is long gone, and Richie has absolutely no reason to be a hen about this shit. It's an extracurricular, for fuck's sake. Eddie's fine.

And he is fine. He drops his backpack and climbs up on the bed and pretends to be cool for all of twenty seconds before gushing like the lame-o he is about how much fun he had, how fast he was, how nice the coach was. Richie sits on him and threatens to spit on him until Eddie swears he's not going to leave him for Coach Shaughnessy, cross his heart and hope to die.

The first meet isn't for weeks and weeks, and Eddie is only running one race to Ben's three, but Richie spends two hours making an obnoxiously large sign to hold up anyway. It says RUN TO ME KASPBRAK in glitter, with dozens of pink felt hearts glued on the edges, because Richie doesn't do anything halfway.

Eddie's not a track and field prodigy, but he also doesn't trip and bust his knees or his face, so Richie yells the entire length of the race and, afterwards, hikes him up on his back and carries him to the car, preening when Eddie safety-pins the third place ribbon on him.

“So am I gonna get to wear your letter jacket, Eds?” he asks, leaning out of his chair to loom into his space, not giving a shit about the older couple side-eyeing them from across the dining room of the Good & Plenty.

“Like it would fit,” Eddie replies, but he offers Richie the last third of his milkshake in consolation.

In the parking lot, when Richie crowds him up against the car and kisses him slow and only teasingly deep, they both taste like strawberry milk.

When Richie tries to return the ribbon, Eddie tells him to keep it. Richie sticks it up in his locker with a magnet and skims his fingertips over the face of it so often the cheap gold lettering starts to wear off, but it must be close enough to luck, because Eddie places in almost as many races as he runs, and Richie screams his head off every time.

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Eddie isn't delicate no matter what anyone thinks, but sometimes Richie treats him like he is. Eddie calls him a sap, a romantic, but he doesn't shove him off either, even when Richie pulls him in sweetly and wants to spend thirty minutes just making out while they get naked. Eddie can roll his eyes all he wants, but sometimes gentle is just what Richie wants, and it's got nothing to do with Eddie being small or delicate.

“You don't have to seduce me,” Eddie says, half accusing. “I'm gonna put out.”

Richie slips a hand up Eddie's shirt and kisses his shoulder and says, no ire at all: “Who says I will?”

The joke of the century, that. The funniest thing Richie's ever said, hands down. Richie's been sex-obsessed since he was twelve. The first time Eddie let Richie grab his ass, he was hooked. He spent

their entire sophomore year being an absolute shitheel about getting in Eddie's pants properly, and he's made up for it, he really has, but that doesn't mean he's stopped wanting to fuck around with Eddie every waking moment since. And a good chunk of the sleeping ones, too.

Eddie laughs, too loud, too close, enough to send Richie up off of him with a wince. "Christ, Eds."

"Sorry," Eddie says, still laughing but trying to pull him back down. "I'm sorry. You're totally right. Nothing easy about you."

"You know, it's lucky you're so fucking cute, Kaspbrak, 'cause you're a jackass," Richie complains, and when Eddie just hums agreement, he has to lay some weight into him to get him to stop grinning. "Your mom's gone. We've got hours."

"So, what? You want to savor it?" Eddie uses his snidely disbelieving tone, the one that's pretty fucking condescending, the one Richie has to talk himself down from being defensive over. So he backs off, sits up on his hip, and gives Eddie as good of a Look as he can manage without his glasses on.

Eddie equates a certain level of intimacy with invasion, tries to throw walls up just out of habit -- thanks so much for that, Mrs K. Richie's not anywhere near emotionally mature, but he and Eddie are both big personalities, and they've been together long enough that they've figured some of the quirks out, just for the sake of staying boyfriends.

To be honest, Mike helped Richie with a lot of it. Mike's an outsider, good at observing people, at spotting the patterns in behaviour. He says it's just a matter of thinking it out, after that. Psychology is way outside Richie's comfort zone, but it was worth the effort, for Eddie.

It helped him figure out some of his own shit, too. Like why he got his feelings hurt so easily at anything like rejection, and how to reel it in.

"Yeah, Eds, I wanna take it slow. It's nice. My two favorite things, you know? Sex and you. I could do this all night."

To his credit, Eddie takes his time thinking about it before he answers. They both do their fair share.

“Okay,” he says, and props himself further up on the pillows, pats his chest to invite Richie back down. “But I swear to god, if she comes home early and I end up with blue balls, I’m going to lock my window for a month.”

Richie promises and they roll around for a while longer with all their clothes still on, until their mouths feel raw from it and Eddie’s jaw aches too much for more. He sits up so Richie can take his shirt off, skimming his hands up Eddie’s ribs with just enough force to not be ticklish. He even makes a half-assed attempt to get his hair to lay down again, like Richie isn’t going to fuck it up again as soon as possible.

Richie doesn’t have an oral fixation, but when he’s not talking he likes to be doing something with his mouth, and so Eddie is usually wearing a handful of marks under his clothes. Richie skims his thumbs over a couple of them while Eddie settles on his hips, trying to avoid sitting directly on his dick. The not quite successful dick avoidance is so distracting that Richie almost misses the other bruise.

It looks a couple days from fresh, already going kind of yellow, but it’s big. Starts at his shoulder and goes most of the way down his upper arm.

Eddie's not the most graceful creature on the planet and he doesn't live in a bubble, so there's a dozen perfectly ordinary ways he could have gotten that, easy. But the way he looks at Richie when he knows he's seen it, tracking his expression, that narrows things down fast.

Eddie is not delicate or helpless, but that doesn't mean Richie won't fuck somebody up for him, over him. Richie knows his way around a baseball bat. He can do it.

“What happened?” he asks, grasping at casual, while in his head he's stuck on a loop of *stay calm, be cool, don't freak him out* .

“Locker,” Eddie replies but Richie can feel how tense he is under hand, and he has never wanted to punch anyone this much.

Richie presses his fingertips firmly into the inch of fat that sits above the waist of Eddie’s dockers, just to touch him there, to cup Eddie in

his hands, to remind himself that being small doesn't mean Eddie's fragile.

"Like how? There's a difference between running into a locker and being pushed into one. Yanno?"

It's the difference between clumsy and targeted. Richie's been resentful of Sonia Kaspbrak for a long time now, but he knows he has that manic streak in him too. That he could lock Eddie up for his own protection, if it came right down to it. He hates it, he hates himself for it, but the idea of someone putting their hands on Eddie and shoving, that's — fuck, that's napalm in his veins. There's no reasoning around that burn.

"Don't look at me like that," Eddie snaps, pinning Richie down against the pillow by the shoulders. "I'm not—"

"I know you aren't. I know. I don't think you are. I swear I don't, Eddie. But that doesn't mean I don't wanna fuck someone's face up right now."

Eddie jostles him ungently, shoving his weight down onto Richie's shoulders hard enough to make them bounce a bit against the mattress. "You don't get to be macho about me."

"Fuck that," Richie says, and holds on tighter. "This has got nothing to do with macho. I get to want to break somebody over this, Eds. You'd want to, if it was me."

Eddie keeps him pinned for a bit, glaring, his mouth all pursed up in indignation. But he lets go eventually, huffing while he does it. Richie doesn't let him roll away. Richie sits up and folds his arms as snugly around Eddie as he can.

"It was Jack Dixon," Eddie says, not quiet enough to be ashamed, but just out of stubbornness.

"The freshman?"

"Yes, the freshman, Tozier. God. Fuck you. He's big, okay?"

Jack Dixon either got held back a year or started shooting up early,

because he's just a couple inches shorter than Richie already. But that's a problem, too. Richie can't kick the shit out of a freshman. He can't even threaten to, not like he wants. Seniors who pick fights with the thirteen-year-olds are scummy, hands down.

"Well, damn, sweetheart, how am I supposed to fuck up a freshman? That's just bad form."

Eddie shoves him off, but he follows Richie down onto the pillows easily enough, once Richie has looked appropriately contrite. He even pulls him in for hair stroking, which drains every ounce of fight that Richie's ever had in his body.

"You could sic Ben on him," Eddie says, once he's carded all of Richie's curls out into a fluff.

Richie kisses the pale edge of a bruise. "You're a tiny, tiny genius, Eddie baby."

"And don't you forget it," Eddie says, getting a fistful of hair and pulling Richie into a kiss.